

ESEA Section 1003(g) School Improvement Grants (SIG)
Lincoln Public Schools

CULLER ELEMENTARY

- Section 2 – School Level Information
- Action Plan
- State of the Schools Reports
- School Profile
- External Accreditation Team Visit Report
- The Leadership and Learning Center Audit

Lincoln Public Schools – Culler Middle School

Section 2. SCHOOL LEVEL INFORMATION

PART A. DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION SCHOOL LEVEL

A.1 Analysis of Need

Profiles: Printed from NDE website for 2007-08 and 2008-09 (following)

Additional Data Needed:

Reporting Metrics for the School Improvement Grants and Student Achievement not captured on the Profile from the State of the Schools Report for 2008-09

CULLER MIDDLE SCHOOL	
1) Percentage of limited English proficient students (of all ELL students that were tested) who attained a Level 4 or 5 on the ELDA	43.4%
2) Graduation rate	Not applicable
3) College enrollment rate	Not applicable
Leading indicators	
4) Number of minutes within the school year	1,043 hours, or 62,580 minutes
5) Number and percentage of students completing advanced coursework, early-college high schools or dual enrollment classes	Not applicable
6) Dropout rate	Not applicable
7) Student attendance rate	2009-10: 93.68% 6- 93.66% 7- 93.88% 8- 93.53%
8) Discipline incidents (suspensions, expulsions as reported to NDE)	Duplicated Count of number of suspensions: 195 Unduplicated count: 108 Expulsions: 8
9) Truants (although this is a required Metric, districts do not need to report baseline data at this time)	Not collected at this time.
10) Distribution of teachers by performance level on district's teacher evaluation system (will be collected in Spring 2011)	Not collected at this time.
11) Teacher attendance rate (although this is a required Metric, districts do not need to report baseline data at this time)	Not collected at this time.

Student Achievement and Leading Indicators:

Identified areas of need in student achievement:

Embedded professional development

Formative assessment to inform instruction

Parent and student engagement in learning

Data examined for identification of needs:

Report card data (including general education and ELL report cards)

Performance by grade for students on district CRTs

Behavioral referrals

The Interventions identified by the building school improvement team with the support of district leadership includes;

- a. Two instructional coaches for embedded professional development
- b. Professional development for differentiated instruction and behavior.
- c. Implement student led conferences

Culler Middle School staff members will be piloting and ultimately implementing the use of a data analysis system purchased by the district. This system will provide current data about student performance for all of their students and will assist them in using data to make instructional adjustments in a timely fashion. The data analysis system will also provide leadership teams with relevant and current data in order to support the efforts of teams to make those instructional adjustments. The data will include formative assessments that are created by the district and/or created by individual teachers and teams at Culler Middle School. Data will be analyzed throughout the school year and will also be compiled at the end of each school year to guide future planning efforts. Equipment and/or supplies will be purchased in order to provide access to the relevant data for all stakeholders.

(b) Programs/Services Profile:

Culler Middle School Elementary currently provides the following:

- Student Leadership Team
- Girls Talk
- Reading and math Interventions
- 4-H
- Tri-Mentoring programs
- Community Learning Centers
- Extracurricular Clubs
- Parent teacher Potlucks
- One Book One Family
- Supplemental Education Services
- PIRC

Additional program and service information is provided in the attached Culler Middle School Profile brochure.

Identified areas of need:

Embedded professional development
Formative assessment to inform instruction
Parent and student engagement in learning

The programs and services support the family engagement and literacy development, extended learning through Community Learning Centers activities and clubs, preschool, career and college ready learning and activities.

(c) Staff Profile:

Identified areas of need:

A full analysis of a profile of teachers will need to be conducted during the first year of the grant with the additional information that is now available through the new on-line access to teacher personnel files and the new principal and teacher appraisal systems. Provide ongoing professional development linked to student achievement and teacher appraisal domains

Culler Middle School will use the expertise of district and building level consultants, including instructional coaches, district curriculum specialist and administrators, and external consultants to identify the curricular and instructional strategies that will generate the greatest gains in student achievement. The employment of two on-site instructional coaches will help facilitate ongoing embedded learning and practice for staff.

(d) Curriculum/Instructional Practices Profile:

Identified areas of need:

Vertical alignment of instructional strategies
Use of formative and summative assessment data

A review of the alignment of instructional strategies in place and the addition of the proposed strategies in this application will ensure basic instruction is provided for all students, meets district guidelines before any additional programs or interventions are added. We must assure that each and every student is learning the guaranteed and viable curriculum.

Increasing collaboration time has been identified as a priority in the Culler Middle School plan for improvement. This collaboration time will include opportunities for teachers to work in vertical teams as well. This time will be structured to make sure that there is vertical alignment of both the curriculum and of the instructional strategies that are being used in each grade level. Teachers will be compensated for additional time spent in collaboration outside of contract time.

One professional development need that has been identified by the Culler Middle School staff is related to the creation and use of formative and summative assessments. A plan for ongoing and job-embedded professional development will be created to make sure that staff members learn relevant content about how to create effective formative assessments and how to use the data that they generate. An external consultant may be used, but that individual would work in collaboration with the instructional coaches to ensure that the training would be supported when the consultant was not present.

(e) System Profile:

Identified areas of need:

Alignment of school improvement efforts and plans
Extending the instructional time

(f) Describe the process used, the participants involved, and the involvement of stakeholders in analyzing the needs of this school and selecting the intervention model:

The Culler Middle School staff has been engaged in the process of identifying the most significant needs related to student achievement, staff learning, and program development. Starting in the 2010-11 school year under the leadership of a newly assigned principal, the school will begin a process to update its data that will guide the development of a school wide plan moving away from the current targeted assisted model. A representative team, with input from the broader school community, including staff, families, community partners, district personnel, and technical support, developed a school improvement action plan and an accountability plan. These plans were approved by the entire Culler Middle School staff.

CULLER MIDDLE SCHOOL

IA.3. Action Plans for Tier III Schools

I. IDENTIFIED NEED: Culler Middle School has failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress for the last five years. Teachers and administrators consistently identify coaches as an important strategy for the improvement of math and language arts instruction.

II. RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICES TO SUPPORT IDENTIFIED

ACTIVITY/STRATEGY: *Cognitive Coaching: A Synthesis of the Research*, Edwards (2008, p. 1) identified nine outcomes that can be expected from Cognitive Coaching: (1) increase in student test scores and “other benefits to students,” (2) growth in teacher efficacy, (3) increase in reflective and complex thinking among teachers, (4) increase in teacher satisfaction with career and position, (5) increase in professional climate at schools, (6) increase in teacher collaboration, (7) increase in professional assistance to teachers, (8) increase in personal benefits to teachers, and (9) benefit to people in fields other than teaching. For the purposes of this chapter, Edwards’ nine outcomes can be collapsed into impact on students (outcome number 1) and impact on teachers (outcome numbers 2 through 8).

Tier III – Improvement Activities (Copy and complete as many as needed)	
Activity: 2 b	Implement coaching model in all Grades (6-8)
Key steps	Hire 2.0 FTE coaches in the academic areas of Math and Language Arts.
Start Date	8-11-2010
Full implementation date	6-30-2013
Person(s) responsible	Principal, Teachers, District Level Curriculum Specialists
Monitor and evaluate	Teachers and coaches will utilize formative and summative assessments to measure coaching effectiveness.
Cost for three years	2 coaches, \$486,120

I. IDENTIFIED NEED: Culler staff is not currently utilizing common formative assessment to inform instruction. Culler Middle School has failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress for the last five years. Common formative assessment is part of the school’s plan to restructure.

II. RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICES TO SUPPORT IDENTIFIED

ACTIVITY/STRATEGY: Common formative assessment is the next step in the

district’s overarching PLC professional development strategy. “Advanced PLC training does not come from formal training. It comes from doing the work of PLCs. It comes from trying a lot of things, learning from what works and what does not, thinking about what was learned, making adjustments, and trying again. Formative Assessment are all activities undertaken by teachers and their students that provide information to be used as feedback: to adjust instruction in support of additional learning, to guide and support student learning, and to support the closing of gaps in learning (Eaker, DuFour, DuFour, 2009).”

Tier III – Improvement Activities (Copy and complete as many as needed)	
Activity: 2 b	Culler will implement a 3-year plan to develop Culler staff into formative assessment experts to increase student achievement
Key steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contract services of Tami Heflebower to provide framework and ongoing support of staff work with formative assessment, clear objectives and academic vocabulary 2. Utilize PLC time to accomplish necessary learning. 3. Collaborate with other Title I schools to share success and ask questions regarding the use of academic vocabulary and formative assessment strategies.
Start Date	8-11-2010
Full implementation date	6-30-2013
Person(s) responsible	Principal, teaching staff
Monitor and evaluate	Educational Services #18 will work with Culler to monitor and adjust staff development where student needs are not being met.
Cost for three years	\$126,000 (Heflebower contract), 2 days training for all staff each year, Subs for 10 SIP/Data team members to work with consultant 14 days over 3 years and develop planning for staff, pay SIP and Data Team members .5 point a year for three years to provide direction to rest of staff (10 staff members), \$361,846

I. IDENTIFIED NEED: Staff has noted the need for a higher percentage of attendance at parent-teacher conferences. Many students lack ownership of their own academic achievement. Teachers may also lack the belief that students can own their own academic success. Culler Middle School has failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress for the last five years.

II. RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICES TO SUPPORT IDENTIFIED

ACTIVITY/STRATEGY: Student-led conferences help build an internal locus of control for students to take ownership of their education and increase parent attendance. "Student-led conferences are the biggest breakthrough in communicating about student achievement in the last century. When students are well prepared over an extended period to tell the story of their own success (or lack thereof), they seem to experience a fundamental shift in their internal sense of responsibility for that success. The pride in accomplishment that students feel when they have positive story to tell and tell it well can be immensely motivational. The sense of personal responsibility that they feel when anticipating what it will be like to face the music of having to tell their story of poor achievement can also drive them to productive work. (Rich Stiggins, Phi Delta Kappan, November 1999)."

Tier III – Improvement Activities (Copy and complete as many as needed)	
Activity: 2 b	Implement student-led conferences.
Key steps	<p>Year 1. Provide 6th grade teachers 16 hours of planning time to work with a Lead Facilitator (Donna Wolzen) to research and develop a blueprint and implement student led conferences for 6th grade students. Also needed would be a day of travel to Millard Public Schools to observe their student-led conferences.</p> <p>Year 2. Provide 7th grade teachers 8 hours of plan time to implement conferences</p> <p>3. Allow 8th grade teachers 8 hours of plan time to implement student lead conferences.</p>
Start Date	8-11-2010
Full implementation date	6-30-2013
Person(s) responsible	Principal, teachers
Monitor and evaluate	We will use conference evaluation forms for both students and parents.
Cost for three years	<p>40 hours for lead facilitator, 16 hours for 6th grade team, 8 hours for 7th grade team</p> <p>8 hours for 8th grade team, \$24,314</p>

2007-2008 State of the Schools Report
A Report on Nebraska Public Schools
SCHOOL DISTRICT: LINCOLN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL BUILDING: C CULLER MIDDLE SCHOOL

▶ School Profile

School Profile

2007 - 2008
School Characteristics

School Data	State Statistics	District Statistics	School Statistics
<u>Poverty Percentage</u>	37.33%	38.18%	76.63%
<u>English Language Learners Percentage</u>	6.47%	9.16%	23.60%
<u>Mobility Percentage</u>	12.38%	15.54%	29.66%
<u>Enrollment</u>	290,767	33,464	445

Percentage of Students Meeting Standards - Reading

Grades	06	07	08
<u>All Students (including ELL and Special Education)</u>	88.11%	54.01%	87.25%
<u>Special Education Students</u>	88.89%	22.58%	66.67%
<u>English Language Learners</u>	70.97%	32.26%	67.86%
Gender			
<u>Male</u>	86.11%	50.82%	81.69%
<u>Female</u>	90.14%	56.58%	92.31%
Race / Ethnicity			
<u>American Indian / Alaska Native</u>	*	*	*
<u>Asian or Pacific Islander</u>	100.00%	*	100.00%
<u>White, Not Hispanic</u>	91.55%	62.12%	93.42%
<u>Black, Not Hispanic</u>	78.13%	38.89%	83.78%
<u>Hispanic</u>	85.71%	47.83%	65.00%
<u>Free / Reduced Priced Meals</u>	87.27%	49.11%	82.35%
<u>Migrants</u>	*	*	*

Percentage of Students Meeting Standards - Mathematics

Grades	06	07	08
<u>All Students (including ELL and Special Education)</u>	89.47%	89.52%	69.93%
<u>Special Education Students</u>	94.44%	95.83%	50.00%
<u>English Language Learners</u>	76.92%	72.41%	44.00%
Gender			
<u>Male</u>	88.24%	88.89%	70.15%
<u>Female</u>	90.77%	90.00%	69.74%
Race / Ethnicity			
<u>American Indian / Alaska Native</u>	*	*	*
<u>Asian or Pacific Islander</u>	100.00%	*	91.67%
<u>White, Not Hispanic</u>	94.20%	94.92%	82.19%
<u>Black, Not Hispanic</u>	82.14%	78.13%	50.00%
<u>Hispanic</u>	83.33%	86.36%	42.11%
<u>Free / Reduced Priced Meals</u>	89.00%	88.12%	65.31%
<u>Migrants</u>	*	*	*

Percentage of Students Meeting Standards - Science

Grades	06	07	08
<u>All Students (including ELL and Special Education)</u>	75.74%	83.19%	69.23%
<u>Special Education Students</u>	55.56%	65.38%	44.12%
<u>English Language Learners</u>	58.33%	70.59%	66.67%
Gender			
<u>Male</u>	79.71%	82.00%	70.00%
<u>Female</u>	71.64%	84.06%	68.49%
Race / Ethnicity			
<u>American Indian / Alaska Native</u>	*	*	*
<u>Asian or Pacific Islander</u>	*	*	100.00%
<u>White, Not Hispanic</u>	82.86%	86.67%	81.33%
<u>Black, Not Hispanic</u>	54.84%	76.67%	51.35%
<u>Hispanic</u>	75.00%	77.78%	33.33%

<u>Free / Reduced Priced Meals</u>	70.87%	78.95%	61.86%
<u>Migrants</u>	*	*	*

Percentage of Students Meeting Standards - Writing

	08
<u>All Students (including ELL and Special Education)</u>	94.70%
<u>Special Education Students</u>	87.88%
<u>English Language Learners</u>	86.67%
Gender	
<u>Male</u>	91.43%
<u>Female</u>	97.53%
Race / Ethnicity	
<u>American Indian / Alaska Native</u>	*
<u>Asian or Pacific Islander</u>	100.00%
<u>White, Not Hispanic</u>	97.47%
<u>Black, Not Hispanic</u>	94.87%
<u>Hispanic</u>	82.35%
<u>Free / Reduced Priced Meals</u>	91.75%
<u>Migrants</u>	*

* Data was masked to protect the identity of students using one of the following criteria:

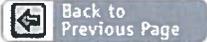
- 1) Fewer than 10 students were reported in the grade or standard.
- 2) All students were reported in a single performance category.

Student Performance Decision used for AYP

AYP	Middle
Reading	
<u>All students</u>	MET
<u>American Indian/Alaska Native</u>	*
<u>Asian or Pacific Islander</u>	~
<u>White, Not Hispanic</u>	MET
<u>Black, Not Hispanic</u>	MET
<u>Hispanic</u>	MET
<u>Students eligible for free and reduced lunch</u>	MET
<u>Special Education Students</u>	NOT MET
<u>English Language Learners</u>	NOT MET
Math	
<u>All students</u>	MET
<u>American Indian/Alaska Native</u>	*
<u>Asian or Pacific Islander</u>	~
<u>White, Not Hispanic</u>	MET
<u>Black, Not Hispanic</u>	MET
<u>Hispanic</u>	MET
<u>Students eligible for free and reduced lunch</u>	MET
<u>Special Education Students</u>	MET
<u>English Language Learners</u>	MET
<u>No Child Left Behind Qualified Teachers</u>	100.00%

* Data was masked to protect the identity of students using one of the following criteria:
 1) Fewer than 10 students were reported in the grade or standard.
 2) All students were reported in a single performance category.

~ To be included for AYP determinations, a group must have at least 30 students.





2008-2009 State of the Schools Report
A Report on Nebraska Public Schools

SCHOOL DISTRICT: LINCOLN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SCHOOL BUILDING: C CULLER MIDDLE SCHOOL

▶ School Profile

School Profile

2008 - 2009

School Characteristics

School Data	State Statistics	District Statistics	School Statistics
<u>Poverty Percentage</u>	38.35%	39.73%	81.01%
<u>English Language Learners Percentage</u>	6.31%	7.73%	18.76%
<u>School Mobility Rate</u>	12.02%	15.45%	25.40%
<u>Enrollment</u>	292,030	34,057	437

Percentage of Students Meeting Standards - Reading

Grades	06	07	08
<u>All Students (including ELL and Special Education)</u>	90.77%	67.83%	93.28%
<u>Special Education Students</u>	75.00%	45.83%	90.91%
<u>English Language Learners</u>	77.27%	23.81%	85.19%
Gender			
<u>Male</u>	87.67%	67.12%	91.94%
<u>Female</u>	94.74%	68.57%	94.44%
Race / Ethnicity			
<u>American Indian / Alaska Native</u>	*	*	*
<u>Asian or Pacific Islander</u>	90.00%	*	*
<u>White, Not Hispanic</u>	93.10%	76.00%	95.45%
<u>Black, Not Hispanic</u>	86.21%	51.61%	86.49%
<u>Hispanic</u>	89.66%	61.54%	100.00%
<u>Free / Reduced Priced Meals</u>	89.19%	62.26%	91.26%
<u>Migrants</u>	*	*	*

Percentage of Students Meeting Standards - Mathematics

Grades	06	07	08
<u>All Students (including ELL and Special Education)</u>	95.35%	89.44%	62.41%
<u>Special Education Students</u>	83.33%	83.33%	43.75%
<u>English Language Learners</u>	100.00%	78.26%	28.57%
Gender			
<u>Male</u>	93.06%	91.55%	66.67%
<u>Female</u>	98.25%	87.32%	58.57%
Race / Ethnicity			
<u>American Indian / Alaska Native</u>	*	*	*
<u>Asian or Pacific Islander</u>	90.00%	*	*
<u>White, Not Hispanic</u>	96.55%	93.33%	74.63%
<u>Black, Not Hispanic</u>	93.10%	80.00%	47.22%
<u>Hispanic</u>	96.43%	85.19%	42.86%
<u>Free / Reduced Priced Meals</u>	94.55%	87.62%	57.84%
<u>Migrants</u>	*	*	*

Percentage of Students Meeting Standards - Science

Grades	06	07	08
<u>All Students (including ELL and Special Education)</u>	83.59%	92.86%	78.91%
<u>Special Education Students</u>	54.17%	82.61%	50.00%
<u>English Language Learners</u>	63.16%	78.95%	62.50%
Gender			
<u>Male</u>	80.28%	89.86%	84.21%
<u>Female</u>	87.72%	95.77%	74.65%
Race / Ethnicity			
<u>American Indian / Alaska Native</u>	*	*	*
<u>Asian or Pacific Islander</u>	90.00%	*	*
<u>White, Not Hispanic</u>	81.03%	94.59%	84.85%
<u>Black, Not Hispanic</u>	85.19%	87.10%	74.19%
<u>Hispanic</u>	82.14%	91.67%	72.73%

<u>Free / Reduced Priced Meals</u>	82.57%	92.16%	74.75%
<u>Migrants</u>	*	*	*

Percentage of Students Meeting Standards - Writing

	08
<u>All Students (including ELL and Special Education)</u>	91.67%
<u>Special Education Students</u>	87.10%
<u>English Language Learners</u>	84.62%
Gender	
<u>Male</u>	86.15%
<u>Female</u>	97.01%
Race / Ethnicity	
<u>American Indian / Alaska Native</u>	*
<u>Asian or Pacific Islander</u>	*
<u>White, Not Hispanic</u>	95.45%
<u>Black, Not Hispanic</u>	82.86%
<u>Hispanic</u>	95.00%
<u>Free / Reduced Priced Meals</u>	89.22%
<u>Migrants</u>	*

- * Data was masked to protect the identity of students using one of the following criteria:
- 1) Fewer than 10 students were reported in the grade or standard.
 - 2) All students were reported in a single performance category.

Student Performance Decision used for AYP

AYP	Middle	
Reading		
<u>All students</u>	MET	
<u>American Indian/Alaska Native</u>	*	
<u>Asian or Pacific Islander</u>	~	
<u>White, Not Hispanic</u>	MET	
<u>Black, Not Hispanic</u>	MET	
<u>Hispanic</u>	MET	
<u>Students eligible for free and reduced lunch</u>	MET	
<u>Special Education Students</u>	MET	
<u>English Language Learners</u>	MET	
Math		
<u>All students</u>	MET	
<u>American Indian/Alaska Native</u>	*	
<u>Asian or Pacific Islander</u>	~	
<u>White, Not Hispanic</u>	MET	
<u>Black, Not Hispanic</u>	MET	
<u>Hispanic</u>	MET	
<u>Students eligible for free and reduced lunch</u>	MET	
<u>Special Education Students</u>	MET	
<u>English Language Learners</u>	NOT MET	
<u>No Child Left Behind Qualified Teachers</u>	N / A	

* Data was masked to protect the identity of students using one of the following criteria:
 1) Fewer than 10 students were reported in the grade or standard.
 2) All students were reported in a single performance category.

~ To be included for AYP determinations, a group must have at least 30 students.



Making Good Schools Great

Lincoln Public Schools is the second largest of Nebraska's 375 school districts, with more than 34,000 students. Our goal is to give every student a superb learning environment by providing:

- ◆ Quality teaching
- ◆ Personal attention
- ◆ Excellent facilities and equipment
- ◆ Academic support

How do we measure success?

Each year, we evaluate our students' performance on nationally standardized tests, and measure parent and community satisfaction with Lincoln Public Schools. We are proud of how we measure up—but we are striving to do even better.

MEASURE	2009-10 PERFORMANCE
3rd grade reading	67% (at or above Nat'l ave.)
7th grade math	59% (at or above Nat'l ave.)
ACT scores	LPS Average: 23.3 (US average: 21.1)
Average elementary class size	21

Meeting Our Goals in a Changing Community

Our students reflect Lincoln's changing population:

- ◆ 38% of LPS students participate in the free or reduced price lunch program.
- ◆ 15% of LPS students participate in Special Education.
- ◆ More children who are learning to speak English (in 2009-10, more than 2,152 students from 51 countries who spoke 49 languages).

Although this changing population creates new challenges, we are continuing to improve our test scores and other measures of success. Community support is essential.

How can the community help?

- Be an advocate
 - ◆ Volunteer in your schools. Read to kids, be a tutor, work in the library or share another skill.
 - ◆ Get to know your neighborhood school. Attend school activities and ask how you can help.
 - ◆ Support efforts to attract and keep quality teachers.
-
- Be a donor
 - ◆ Fund-a-Need or plan a gift today for tomorrow's children: www.FoundationForLPS.org.
 - ◆ Provide books, materials, volunteers or other resources.
 - ◆ Participate in business-school partnerships.
 - ◆ Provide internships and work-study programs.
 - ◆ Volunteer to speak at schools or invite an LPS volunteer to speak at your business or community organization.
 - ◆ Support specific LPS projects designed to increase reading, math skills and school attendance.

This public engagement initiative is funded by the Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools with the generous support of the Realtors Association of Lincoln.



Serving the Community

www.LincolnREALTORS.com



**FOUNDATION
LINCOLN PUBLIC SCHOOLS** www.foundationforlps.org

President:
Barbara Bartle
5901 O Street
Lincoln, NE 68510
(402) 436-1612

LINCOLN BOARD OF EDUCATION

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LINCOLN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Culler MIDDLE SCHOOL

Profile



Principal: Dan Larson
5201 Vine Street
Lincoln, NE 68504
402-436-1210 • Fax: 402-436-1226
<http://culler.lps.org>

Students

- 410 Students, grades 6-8
- 56% Minority Students
- 11% Gifted
- 23% Special Education
- ◇ Specific Learning Disability
- ◇ Behavioral Disorder
- ◇ Mental Handicap
- ◇ Speech-Language Impairment
- ◇ Orthopedic Impairment
- 25% Mobility rate
- 81% Eligible for free/reduced meals
- 94% Average daily attendance rate

Staff

- 51 Teachers; 84 total staff
- 14 Average years of teaching
- 2 Full-time counselors, school social worker and specialists in library media, art, music, physical education, computer and reading

Technology

- 3 Computer labs
- 100% Classrooms with computer(s)
- Promethean Interactive white boards in every grade
- 4 Science Labs—New for 2008-09

Special Programs

- One on One Tutoring
- Homework Zone
- Reading Club
- Spelling Bee
- Math Intervention
- Literature Intervention
- Quiz Bowl
- Science Club
- One Book One Family

Extracurricular Clubs

- Anger Management
- When Life Give You Lemons
- Student Leadership Team
- Girls Talk
- Hispanos Unidos
- Math Games on the Web
- Chess Club
- Art Club
- Cooking Club
- Movie Madness
- Zumba (Latin Dance)
- Student with Voices (SWV)
- Football Club
- 4-H (Head, Heart, Hands & Health)
- C-H (Capitol City Christian Church)
- Fitness Basketball
- Girls Step Club
- Girls on the Move
- Kickball
- Soccer
- Triple Threat
- Basketball Team
- Girl Scouts
- Quiz Bowl
- Jazz Band Club
- Wood Working
- Native Pride
- Lego's & Robotics
- Drama Club
- Board Games
- Cougar Studies

Family Programs

- Community Awareness & Learning Services
- Talent Show
- Science Fair
- School Dance
- Guest Speakers
- Community Learning Center
- Holiday Pride
- Parent Teacher Potlucks
- Tri Mentoring Potlucks
- End of the Year Celebration
- One Book One Family
- School Neighborhood Advisory Committee

School Day

- 7:55 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
- Breakfast Program 7:30-8:00 a.m.
- Office 7:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

VIP Partners

- Bryan LGH Nurses Project
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- ◇ Admissions
- ◇ Education Talent Search
- ◇ Department of Athletics
- ◇ Department of Science
- ◇ Cultural Center
- ◇ Department of Communications
- ◇ Campus Sororities and Fraternities
- ◇ Clyde Malone Community Center
- ◇ Indian Community Center
- ◇ Asian Aging Services Center
- ◇ Lincoln Food Bank
- ◇ Nebraska Center for People of Needs
- ◇ Salvation Army
- ◇ UNL-Trio Program
- ◇ Community Learning Center
- ◇ Tri Mentoring Program

What's unique about Culler?

- Opened in 1958
- Most diverse middle school in Lincoln
- Police Chief Tom Casady graduated from Culler
- Served by 2 city bus routes
- Fully air-conditioned building
- Yankee Baseball Pitcher, Joba Chamberlain attended Culler
- UNL Basketball Player, Dominique Kelly attended Culler
- Construction Project including a new main entrance, new classrooms, and the addition of a 3rd gym

Student performance requires a community-driven, comprehensive system of supports

**Lincoln Public Schools External Team Visit
February 11-13, 2009**

Name of School: Culler Middle School

Names of Team Member(s): Betsy Miller, Cherrie Malcom

A. Identify the School Improvement Goal(s)

1. All students will improve in their Reading Comprehension
2. All students will improve in Written Expression
3. All students will improve computation skills and number sense in mathematics
4. Increased parent involvement will be evidenced at Culler Middle School

B. Introductory Comments

The climate that has been created at Culler Middle School is warm, inviting and conducive to learning. All staff members were welcoming and the importance given our visit was impressive. The activities and presentations were well planned and all involved were knowledgeable about the business of educating students. The passion for and focus on learning was evident not only in the scheduled meeting, but throughout the building as we toured and watched interactions between staff and students.

C. Successes, Strengths, and/or Accomplishments

1. Student performance at Culler Middle School on AYP standards has increased in the past three years in reading, writing, and mathematics. It is easy to see that this accomplishment is due to the diligent efforts of the staff and administration. Their success should be celebrated.
2. A culture of collaboration has been created. Several examples were shared that demonstrate how all staff members support the established common learning goals. The commitment of the teaching staff to meet frequently with their PLC teams, not just on the day set aside monthly for this purpose, is very commendable.
3. The incorporation of RTI into the flow of student scheduling and the creation of Personal Learning Plans for all targeted students is noteworthy. Efforts are also made to include counseling and ELL staff when creating plans to address the learning needs of students.
4. Scheduling is done to ensure that to the extent possible, all teachers have a teaching partner with whom to collaborate to guarantee students' success.

5. The expectation of use of effective, research-based instructional strategies and the purposeful infusion of technology into the daily routine should help prepare Culler Middle School students for the skills they will need to be successful in high school and beyond.
6. It is impressive to see that individual plans are created for those not mastering specific objectives of the curriculum. Instruction is expected to be focused and intentional, and these plans answer the question “What do we do with the student who doesn’t pass?”
7. School personnel are also addressing the social and emotional needs of students by the creation of a committee to explore behavioral issues and make recommendations as to how staff could consistently address them.
8. The determination of the administrators to conduct frequent walk-through observations for their teaching staff was admirable. The form that has evolved keeps staff focused on research-proven instructional strategies, allows for timely positive feedback, and provides a way to encourage improved, intentional instruction.
9. The seamless connection between academic endeavors and the Community Learning Center is notable. A strong example of this is linking a ticket for a dance to parent involvement at parent teacher conferences. This shows a creative and effective example of blending adolescent needs with school needs!
10. The number of health visits is an excellent piece of data and its inclusion in the overall depiction of Culler students shows the extent of the collaboration to improve learning.

D. Recommendations for consideration in further implementing the plan and/or achieving the goals

1. The students targeted for interventions could miss many academic connection classes. Perhaps this could be counteracted by the CLC including more art, music, world languages and FCS/IT type activities after school.
2. Student achievement on district assessments is steadily improving. It is recommended that efforts to monitor student progress, apply research-based strategies, and making connections with parents and the community continue to help the educators and students at Culler Middle School reach their goals.
3. The number and quality of interventions is impressive. It would be suggested that work continue on improving the system of interventions to provide seamless movement between Title 1, Response to Intervention, and regular classroom support. A

Schoolwide Title 1 Program would allow much flexibility with regard to access to interventions as needed.

E. Additional Comments

It is evident from the external team visit that staff members at Culler Middle School are continually striving to ensure the academic success, social competency, and emotional health of their students. Their professionalism and collaborative efforts have resulted in creating an effective learning environment. We saw many smiling faces as we walked around the building. We hope that all members of the Culler Middle School Community take great pride in their accomplishments. Thank you for an informative and enjoyable visit.

**Lincoln Public Schools External Team Visit
February 11-13, 2009**

SUGGESTED REPORT FORMAT

Name of School: Culler Middle School

Names of Team Member(s): Betsy Miller, Cherrie Malcolm – reporting separately due to storm!

A. Identify the School Improvement Goal(s)

- 1. All students will improve in their Reading Comprehension**
- 2. All students will improve in Written Expression**
- 3. All students will improve computation skills and number sense in mathematics**
- 4. Increased parent involvement will be evidenced at Culler Middle School**

B. Introductory Comments

I was impressed by the seriousness given our visit. It was well planned and all involved were knowledgeable about the business of educating students. There was a passion and focus evidenced not only in our discussion room, but throughout the building as we toured and watched interactions between staff and students.

C. Successes, Strengths, and/or Accomplishments

1. The seamless connection between academic endeavors with the Community Learning Center was impressive. The strongest example of this was tying a ticket for a dance to parent involvement at parent teacher conferences. Good mix of adolescent needs dovetailing with school needs!

2. The commitment of the teaching staff to meet more than once weekly with their PLC teams, not just on the day set aside monthly for this purpose.

3. The incorporation of RTI into the flow of student scheduling was interesting to see. This went along with Personal Learning Plans for all targeted students. What a great connection for the counseling and ELL staff to stay tuned in on the learning needs for individual students.

4. Tying in the number of health visits to be included in the overall picture of the Culler students was an excellent piece of data.

5. For the administrators to have looked at not the number of preps a teacher has, but the “pairing” of teachers so that, to the extend possible, everyone has a teaching partner with whom to collaborate.

6. I was impressed to see that there were plans for those students not passing specific objectives of the curriculum. Instruction was expected to be focused and intentional, and these plans answered the question “What do we do with the student who doesn’t pass?”

7. The expectation that when a written answer was needed, it should be done in complete sentence form was an excellent way to include the majority of teachers, no matter what their instructional emphasis, in the overall school goal.

8. I felt that it was an excellent plan on the part of the administrators to utilize a staff committee to explore behavior issues and make recommendations as to how everyone could be on board to be a part of the behavior issues and solutions.

9. The determination of the administrators to do walk through observations for their teaching staff was admirable. The form that has evolved keeps staff focused on research-proven instructional strategies, allows for letting teachers know what you are seeing that is positive, and a way to provide quiet pushes for improved, intentional student instruction.

10. The climate felt warm and inviting. I saw many smiling faces as I walked around the building.

D. Recommendations for consideration in further implementing the plan and/or achieving the goals

1. Where are each of the PLC teams in their essential outcomes? I did not see but the one 6th grade math example. Are all PLC teams so focused?

2. What is the data usage for all student learning? Are the needs of all students, not just targeted students, being met?

3.

4.

E. Additional Comments

Lincoln Public School District Implementation Audit™

For Culler Middle School

**A Collaborative Project
Between the
Lincoln Public School District and
The Leadership and Learning Center**

November, 2009

**The
Leadership
and Learning
Center™**

317 Inverness Way South, Suite 150
Englewood, Colorado 80112
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www.LeadandLearn.com

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1.0 Executive Summary

Charles Culler School was built in 1959 as a combination junior high and elementary school. The initial enrollment was 285 students. From 1963 to 1993, Culler was a junior high school with grades seven, eight, and nine. In 1993, Culler became a three-year middle school serving students in grades six, seven, and eight. Culler Middle School has been identified as the only Title One Targeted Assisted middle school in Lincoln Public Schools. Current enrollment at Culler is slightly under 450 students. Student demographics at this middle school include:

- White/other: 49.3%; Native American: 2.3%; African American: 25.2%; Asian American: 7.1%; Hispanic American: 16.1%; Total Minority=50.7%.
- Male: 47.5%; Female: 52.5%.
- Free/Reduced Lunch Program Participants: 332 students (76.0% of total population).
- ELL: (English Language Learners): 74 students (17% of total population).
- Gifted Program: 40 students (9.1% of total population).
- Mobility: 131 students transferred in or out; .234 mobility index; 23.3% of official (September) enrollment count students were mobile.
- Culler Middle School has a 95.3% Average Daily Attendance rate and 42.2% of students live with both parents (classified by district as "Traditional Family").

Culler Middle School is a professional learning community with a tradition of service, a culture of collaboration, and a commitment to student learning.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The Implementation Audit™ process considers three essential questions. First, what initiatives are in place in the Lincoln Public School District? Second, what is the range of implementation for each initiative? Third, what is the relationship between each initiative and student achievement? The purpose of this study is to provide practical information for teachers, administrators, and policymakers in the Lincoln Public School District so they can identify and capitalize on their strengths, and directly confront their greatest challenges.

1.2 Methodology

The analysis and conclusions in the following pages are based on the results obtained from interviews, focus groups, an online survey, observations, and document reviews for more than 10 prioritized initiatives in the District. Additionally, a multivariate analysis was performed in which rubric scores were compared to student achievement data.

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Lincoln Public Schools

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A few words about the limitations and opportunities of correlation analysis are important as you consider the results of our analysis. Any analysis that relies upon associations (correlations) between variables has undeniable limitations. First and foremost, correlation is not causation. Some things that are associated are causal, such as thunderclouds and rain. Other things may be associated, but not logically linked from cause to effect. Our illustration of this principle with an important educational example is the widely observed correlation between high poverty and low achievement. A facile analysis would conclude that the former is the exclusive cause of the latter. There is an almost equally strong correlation, however, between high poverty and a large proportion of schools that lack the knowledge and skills to be effective in the classroom (Prince, 2002), and in this latter instance, poverty cannot be said to cause a school's ineffectiveness.

Our methodology also examines the data through a process of triangulation, where the degree of implementation for each initiative is compared to reveal how the initiatives interact to improve student achievement. The Leadership and Learning Center utilizes a simple wagon wheel graphic (White, 2005a) to depict how the initiatives interact to offer a practical but multivariate function to the analysis. Each report invites readers to draw their own inferences by comparing current student achievement levels with implementation.

The Lincoln Public School District staff members who participated were candid and forthright, offering a blend of praise and constructive criticism in a safe atmosphere of confidentiality and anonymity.

The present study examined correlations between the specific Implementation Audit™ Rubric variables in implementation and student achievement. Specifically, the school's percentage of proficient student achievement scores for the past year from assessments such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, the Metropolitan Achievement Test, and multiple formative assessments were used for the purposes of this study. The achievement scores are the results indicators, while the Implementation-Audit™ measures of reporting progress of use, commitment of time to implement, cognitive knowledge and skills of the user, collaborating with others, and monitoring and evaluating are the cause variables.

It is important to note that we need not wait for perfect research or randomized trials, as no principal will ever be randomly assigned to engage in poor planning and implementation practices. Rather, we can use what we now know: improvement in the quality of planning, monitoring, and implementation is strongly associated with improvements in student achievement. The challenge for leaders and teachers in the year ahead is to take the most effective initiatives and encourage broader use.

Conversely, for those initiatives that are least effective you may want to consider:

- Possibly abandoning the initiative, because regardless of fidelity of implementation, sustained time of implementation, and a high percent of diffusion within the system, these efforts have failed to produce the hypothesized desired results in student achievement.

OR

- Possibly staying the course with the initiative regardless of its present relationship to student achievement to ensure that quality implementation efforts are rigorously applied to implementation along with strategies to promote a more wide-ranging diffusion of the initiative throughout the impacted parts of the system.

1.3 Findings

School systems, like living organisms, are dynamic, and change with time, student population, and leadership. Therefore, the observations in this report are subject to change. Indeed, as a result of our interviews and observations, some teachers and administrators have already expressed a willingness to improve their practices. Therefore, these findings are as we observed them during the first few weeks of the 2009 school year school and not necessarily the case at the time the reader is looking at these paragraphs.

2.0 Implementation Initiative Inventory

The Implementation Audit™ is a powerful tool for leaders, teachers, and policymakers. It provides locally relevant research evidence to minimize waste and redundancy and maximize every dollar invested in education. The Implementation Audit™ addresses three essential questions:

- What are we implementing?
- What is the range of implementation?
- What is the relationship between implementation and student achievement?

The process is interactive, consisting of several steps. The first step involves creating an Initiative Inventory. Listing these paints a picture of “What are we implementing?” Working with Lincoln Public Schools’ District administrators, we identified the initiatives in instruction, assessment and other areas that system leaders believed to be important to their success. Exhibit 2.1 identifies priority initiatives as well as a brief description of key expectations for each.

2.1 Lincoln Public Schools Priority Initiatives Focus Initiatives & Description of Purpose

2.1.1 Raising the Achievement of Underperforming Students/Pyramid of Interventions

Description of Response to Intervention (RTI): “Response to Intervention” (RTI) is an emerging approach to the diagnosis of learning disabilities that holds considerable promise. In the RTI model, a student with academic delays is given one or more research-validated interventions. The student's academic progress is monitored frequently to see if those interventions are sufficient to help the student to catch up with his or her peers. If the student fails to show significantly improved academic skills despite several well-designed and implemented interventions, this failure to 'respond to intervention' can be viewed as evidence of an underlying learning disability. One advantage of RTI in the diagnosis of educational disabilities is that it allows schools to intervene early to meet the needs of struggling learners. Another advantage is that RTI maps those specific instructional strategies found to benefit a particular student. This information can be very helpful to both teachers and parents.

Purpose of Response to Intervention: The purposes of RTI may vary with the implementing agency. Broadly, RTI has three purposes: prevention of learning failure, intervention to ameliorate learning difficulties, and determination of learning disabilities. The prevention aspect of the RTI framework begins with high-quality core instruction to ensure that any problems students may be experiencing are not related to ineffective teaching practices. For students having academic or behavioral problems, the idea is to promote success before a cycle of failure begins. RTI seeks to intervene before student gaps in learning become so large that a student is labeled as having a learning disability, often needlessly. Prevention is addressed within an RTI framework by employing screening of all students. Student progress is then continuously monitored throughout the school year. Once a student is identified as not meeting predetermined benchmarks after receiving high-quality core instruction, additional supports are provided to the student. Academic issues, such as in literacy or math, as well as behavioral issues may be addressed. This instruction is designed to meet the needs of the student. Initial intervention often occurs in small groups and may take place in the regular education classroom or elsewhere. The person who leads small-group instruction may be the teacher, speech-language pathologist, resource or reading specialist, or other qualified professional unique to each school's environment. The student's responsiveness to this intervention is closely monitored through data collection and analysis. The frequency and duration of interventions can be altered depending on student progress. Then, if the student is showing little progress, the intervention program may increase in intensity to focus on individual needs. If insufficient progress is seen after a predetermined period of time, the student may be referred for further evaluation and possible special education placement.

2.1.2 Professional Learning Communities

Description of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is a collegial group of administrators and school staff who are united in their commitment to student learning. They share a vision, work and learn collaboratively, visit and review other classrooms, and participate in decision making. The benefits to the staff and students include a reduced isolation of teachers, better informed and committed teachers, and academic gains for students. Hord (1997) notes, "As an organizational arrangement, the professional learning community is seen as a powerful staff-development approach and a potent strategy for school change and improvement."

Purpose of Professional Learning Communities: Professional Learning Communities are designed to create a process to facilitate teacher collaboration around essential outcomes, instructional strategies, assessments, and student achievement.

2.1.3 School Improvement

Description of School Improvement (SI): School Improvement (SI) is a continuous improvement model ensuring policies, practices, and procedures are aligned district-wide and focused on increased student achievement. This initiative also includes state and regional accreditation processes (AdvancEd for High Schools). In April 2006, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form one unified organization under the name AdvancED.

Purpose of School Improvement: The purpose of School Improvement is to improve the collective capacity of adults and schools to increase student achievement

2.1.4 Grading Reporting and Assessment Literacy

Description of Grade Reporting (GR) and Assessment Literacy (AL): The Grade Reporting (GR) initiative consists of three components. First, a standards-based assessment with rubrics at the elementary level; second, separating academic assessment from work-study habits and social behavioral skills at the middle level; and third, beginning discussions on effective grading practices at the high school level. The Assessment Literacy (AL) initiative consists of formative and summative assessment training along with understanding the purpose and use of classroom, school, district, and state assessment.

Purpose of Grade Reporting and Assessment Literacy: The purpose of Grade Reporting and Assessment Literacy is to improve the collective capacity of adults and schools to increase student achievement.

2.1.5 Reading Recovery

Description of Reading Recovery (RR): This pullout intervention program provides early struggling readers, primarily first grade; one-on-one tutoring by rigorously trained reading recovery teachers. This intense intervention is designed to have these struggling readers develop and apply strategies to increase fluency and make meaning of text. The Reading Recovery teachers are there to provide individual instruction, ongoing assessment through running records, and continuous coaching as the targeted students progress in their reading. These teachers also serve as resources to classroom teachers working with these struggling readers as well as with other students. Students exit the program when teachers find these students are ready to read proficiently in the regular classroom without this one-on-one support. The Reading Recovery

Council provides a wide variety of programs and services, including publications, annual conferences, advocacy, technical assistance, and special institutes.

Purpose of Reading Recovery: The program is designed to have early readers exit the program ready to perform successfully as readers and learners through their school years and beyond; to increase teachers' ability to apply effective instructional strategies to improve student reading through direct training of teachers and having these teachers share their learned skills with other teachers.

2.1.6 Continuous Curriculum Improvement Process

Description of Continuous Curriculum Improvement Process (CCIP): Continuous Curriculum Improvement Process (CCIP) is a systematic approach to improving instruction through a continuous improvement process of assessing content-area needs, researching best practices, providing appropriate materials, promoting sound instructional strategies, and providing assessments focused in the area of reading and math.

Purpose of Continuous Curriculum Improvement Process (CCIP): The program is designed to be able to provide appropriate curriculum in order for students to learn, and for teachers to deliver good instruction.

2.1.7 Multicultural Education

Description of Multicultural Education (MCE): Multicultural Education not only draws content, concepts, paradigms, and theories from specialized interdisciplinary fields such as ethnic studies and women's studies (and from history and the social and behavioral sciences), it also interrogates, challenges, and reinterprets content, concepts, and paradigms from the established disciplines. Multicultural education applies content from these fields and disciplines to pedagogy and curriculum development in educational settings. Consequently, one definition of multicultural education is a field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that incorporates, for this purpose, content, concepts, principles, theories, and paradigms from history, the social and behavioral sciences, and particularly from ethnic studies and women's studies.

Purpose of Multicultural Education: Multicultural Education is a field of study and an emerging discipline whose major aim is to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups. One of its important goals is to help all students to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and to interact, negotiate, and communicate with people from diverse groups in order to create a civic and moral community that works for the common good.

2.1.8 Positive Behavior Support

Description of Positive Behavior Support (PBS): Improving student academic and behavior outcomes is about ensuring all students have access to the most effective and accurately implemented instructional and behavioral practices and interventions possible. School Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) provides an operational framework for achieving these outcomes. More importantly, SWPBS is NOT a curriculum, intervention, or practice, but IS a decision-making framework that guides selection, integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based academic and behavioral practices for improving important academic and behavior outcomes for all students.

Purpose of Positive Behavior Support: The purpose of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is twofold. First, to provide an integrated system of school-wide, classroom management, and individual student supports designed to give schools simple but effective tactics and strategies to improve behavioral outcomes for students. Second, to provide a school-wide behavior management plan for all students that emphasizes schools partnering with students and parents through caring relationships and high expectations to increase student learning time, to stop disruptive and hurtful behavior, and to teach skills that will lead to school and life success

2.1.9 Flexible Professional Development

Description of Flexible Professional Development (FPD): Flexible Professional Development is a systematic approach to providing professional development in which teachers are able to choose from a wide selection of professional development offerings that will fit their needs and also meet the needs of each school and the district. Teachers are able to choose sessions at various times throughout the summer and school year outside of the school day.

Purpose of Flexible Professional Development (FPD): The purpose of Flexible Professional Development is to help principals, curriculum specialists, and supervisors plan opportunities for their staff that meet varying needs and that allows staff to have an opportunity to participate in developing their own professional development. It is an attempt to meet the needs of the district as well as the teachers.

Initiative(s)	Elementary	Middle School	High School	Year Started	Data-Gathering Methods				
					Survey	Interview	Observation	Focus Group	Document Analysis
1. Raising the Achievement of Underperforming Students/Pyramid of Intervention – RTI	✓	✓	✓	1998 2006				X	
2. Professional Learning Communities	✓	✓	✓	2006	X		X		X
3. School Improvement	✓	✓	✓	2004		X			X
4. Grade Reporting	✓			2005		X			
5. Assessment Literacy		✓		2008		X			
6. Reading Recovery (1st Grade Only)	✓			1996		X			X
7. Continuous Curriculum Improvement Process	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing		X			
8. Multicultural Education	✓	✓	✓	1994	X				
9. Positive Behavior Support	✓	✓	✓	2003				X	
10. Flexible Professional Development	✓	✓	✓	2007		X			X
	9	8	7						

Exhibit 2.1 Implementation Audit™ Data-Gathering Matrix for Lincoln Public Schools

Next, we created an implementation rubric, essentially a map (Hall & Hord, 2006), for each of these initiatives. A rubric is a means of describing what an initiative “looks like” when fully implemented. The Implementation Audit™ rubrics developed for Lincoln Public Schools paint a series of “word pictures” of the adult behaviors and practices and also describes the behaviors and practices as school personnel move from the “Not Proficient” variation toward the “Exemplary” variation, the behaviors and practices described increasingly approach the more ideal practices viewed by the school district.

For each initiative we assessed the degree of implementation at every school using a combination of feedback mechanisms including focus groups, interviews, observations, and document analysis. Results of our assessments are described in the next section.

3.0 Range of Implementation

Change scholars stress the importance of leaders not falling prey to the mistaken belief that change will be accomplished by declaring the adoption of a new program (e.g., Behavior Intervention Support Team), or the purchase of a new curriculum or set of textbooks, or even the professional development seminar at the beginning of school. Rather, change must be seen as an incremental process through which people and organizations move as they slowly acquire the knowledge and skills in the use of new ways (Fullan, 2003).

Toward that end, Gene Hall and Shirley Hord have been contributing to the developing understanding of the educational change process for more than three decades. Their research has been instructive in helping organizations appreciate the fact that successful change begins and ends with understanding the importance of implementation. For example, one of the dozen principles of change described in their book *Implementing Change; Patterns, Principles, and Potholes* state, “there will be no change in outcomes until new practices are implemented” (Hall & Hord, 2006, p. 9). That is, they believe in order for change to be successful, an “implementation bridge” (p. 10) must be constructed to help each member of the organization move from current to desired practice.

While Dr. Doug Reeves supports the idea that organizations change only after individuals within it change, he adds to the research of Hall and Hord (2006) results from his own research in which he found that student achievement results are dramatically higher “when 90 percent or more of a faculty was actively engaged in the change initiative” (Reeves, 2009, p. 86). Therefore, while individuals are important variables in the equation as they implement the intended change, District leadership must make certain a critical mass of potential implementers, nine out of every ten, must be vigorously working to apply the practices of the initiative; or put another way, cross the “implementation bridge” in order to change significantly organizational outcomes.

Thus, the purpose of this section is to depict and to describe the passage of Culler Middle School in an effort to depict where the school is in its “bridge” journey as the school strives to implement the instructional and leadership practices associated with Lincoln Public Schools’ nine priority initiatives.

3.1 School-Wide Range of Implementation of Prioritized LPS Initiatives

Using new initiatives or processes, such as the instructional and leadership strategies associated with the Response to Intervention initiative, is not a simple case of, “Yes, school staff are using it,” or “No, school staff are not using it.” In any given change effort, implementers of the change will be functioning in very different ways with the new practices (Hall & Hord, 2006). Consequently, the real question is, “What is the degree to which schools are using it?”

Thus, we begin with the degree to which implementers are using all of the prioritized initiatives (see Exhibit 3.1) prior to discussing each initiative in detail.

Culler Middle School Range of Implementation

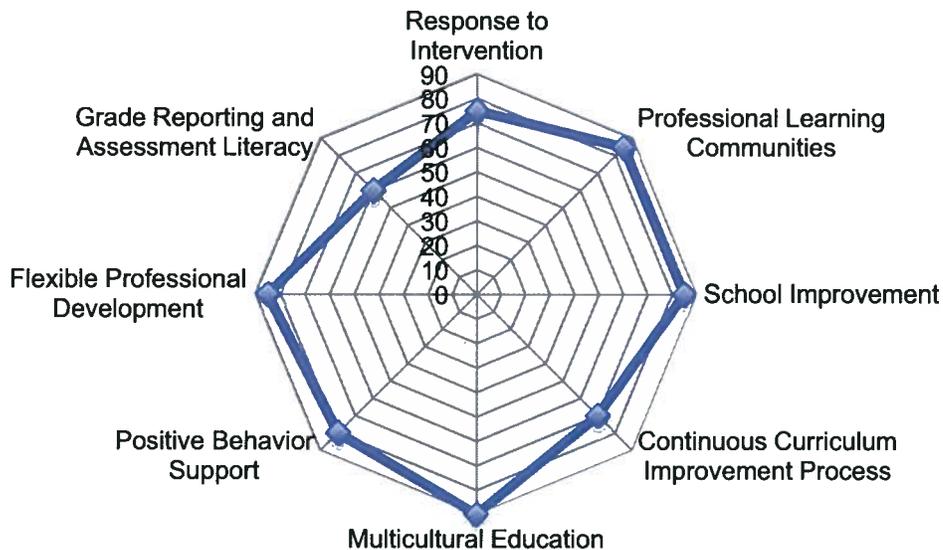


Exhibit 3.1 Culler Middle School Range of Implementation

The data in Exhibit 3.1 reveals areas of strength as well as areas of weakness relative to the school's implementation of all eight of the District's prioritized middle school initiatives. Culler Middle School performed much closer to the desired level of implementation with Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), School Improvement (SI), Multicultural Education (MCE), Positive Behavior Support (Behavior Intervention Support Team—BIST), and Flexible Professional Development (FPD). The school's implementation of the District-wide initiative Grade Reporting/Assessment Literacy and Response to Intervention was the furthest away from the preferred level of implementation.

3.1.1 Response to Intervention (RTI)—6th Grade Reading

Culler Middle School staff is demonstrating a “Proficient” level of implementation of the Response to Intervention (RTI) initiative. Staff report very specific data points (skills) to plan interventions. Response to Intervention at Culler Middle School represents the entire array of efforts to serve students at risk. For example, the school has established structures to address factors that provide all students with maximum opportunities to experience success on a regular basis. These structures include a Management Vision Team (MVT) with established interventions to address aberrant student behavior, a SMART Team which addresses student attendance, a SAP (Student Assistance Process) team which has developed processes to support students, a Targeted Guided Study (TGS) set of courses in reading and math to support struggling reading and math students, and the School Community Intervention Plan (SCIP) team which provides interventions for students in crisis.

A number of comments elicited through the focus groups, interviews, and observation provided a refined focus as to what could be done to strengthen the process and improve student achievement. One staff member offered, “I wish other teachers could see the growth that students are making that I see.”

3.1.2 Professional Learning Communities

Culler Middle School staff is demonstrating an “Exemplary” level of implementation of the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) initiative. A review of the staff responses to the District-wide Implementation Audit™ Survey shows that a majority of the staff (61%) has been working to implement Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for three or more years, 84% of the staff see themselves as either “proficient” or “expert” in their use of this initiative and 68% have received formal training in the initiative, but only 61% devote two or fewer hours per week (two hours out of forty) to its implementation.

Additionally, while a majority of the staff (80%) knows what their supervisors expect of them regarding the implementation of PLCs, 71% are receiving coaching and modeling to help them implement PLCs proficiently, 90% believe they have sufficient knowledge of the initiative to improve student achievement, and 89% are committed to implementing PLCs with fidelity. However, only 55% of staff feel they have enough time to use the PLC initiative to make a difference in student learning.

Time is a fixed resource, as no one can give you more time. However, this fixed resource is largely controlled by the Culler Middle School staff. That is, how you choose to spend your time (e.g., which instructional and leadership strategies represent high leverage opportunities to increase your collective effectiveness) is up to you. Harvard scholar Richard Elmore (2003) concludes that “knowing the right thing to do is the central problem of school improvement” (p. 9). Research consistently highlights the power of teams. Professional learning communities, according to Schmoker (2006), “have emerged as arguably the best, most agreed-upon means by which to continuously improve instruction and student performance” (p. 106). This finding alone should lead the Culler staff to ask the question, “Can we afford to not make time for one of the most promising strategies for sustained, substantive school improvement?”

3.1.3 School Improvement

Culler Middle School staff is **demonstrating an “Exemplary” level of implementation** of the LPS initiative School Improvement. This more-than-proficient rating is the result of the committed and collective work of many hands (e.g., parents, Culler and District staff). The acid test of any School Improvement Planning process (SIP) is the degree to which the proposed and then executed plan positively impacts student achievement. Toward that end, the school has demonstrated documented gains in student achievement in reading, written expression and math that are worthy of mention based upon the criterion-referenced assessment instrument for LPS. Second, the School Improvement team has communicated a clear process for School Improvement that is focused on improving instruction, thereby improving student achievement. The SIP process includes the use of establishing department goals supported by evidence/artifacts, the use of research-based interventions to support learning, the documentation of use of those interventions through teacher and student artifacts, and ongoing support for the use of research-based interventions through building-level, teacher-led staff development and the school’s Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that directly address student performance goals.

While Culler Middle School is implementing the District initiative of School Improvement with a high degree of success, there is one action the school could take that would further improve their efforts in this area. The current school improvement plan contains vague strategy statements that fail to provide staff with a clear picture of what is to be implemented and to what degree. For example, the strategy identified to address the school goals is, “All staff will collaborate in order to improve student learning.” Unless it is clearly described, in observable, measurable practices what “Proficient” collaboration is, the interpretation is left up to individual teachers and PLCs to determine. The statement may be changed to read, “Increase the percentage of staff who collaborate at the “Proficient” or higher level (based on use of a locally developed rubric) monthly.” This kind of implementation clarity is needed to avoid individual interpretation of what the initiative looks like when fully implemented. Moreover, clarity helps avoid mediocre implementation.

3.1.4 Continuous Curriculum Improvement Process

Culler Middle School staff is demonstrating a **“Partially Proficient” level of implementation** of the LPS initiative Continuous Curriculum Improvement Process (CCIP). The school recognizes that the purpose of the initiative is to provide appropriate curriculum in order for students to learn and teachers to deliver good instruction based upon a review of the school’s 2008 “Review of Results.” The Culler staff is practicing the concepts of continuous curriculum improvement as they have certainly made modifications to the Culler Middle School Curriculum (e.g., classroom grading and assessment practices, effective instructional practices in math and reading—especially comprehension—as well as writing—six trait writing training, etc.). Additionally, according to the 2008 Review of Results, “Culler staff has established stronger programming to address factors that provide all students with maximum opportunities to experience success on a regular basis. These programs include, but are not limited to: the Management Vision Team (MVT) which has built interventions to address student behavior concerns; the SMART Team, which addresses student attendance; the SAP (Student Assistance Process) team, which has developed stronger processes to support students; the Technology Team, which meets to develop and implement best practices utilizing updated technology; and the School Community Intervention Plan (SCIP) team, which provides interventions for students in crisis.” In addition, the school offers students who are challenged in reading and mathematics additional course work to support their need in these content areas.

Regardless, the challenge with this initiative, as with the many other initiatives, is to determine how the system of continuous curriculum improvement fits with other systems (e.g., instruction, assessment, etc.) that must be functioning well in order to meet the needs of a changing student population. For example, “How does the planned delivery of the three reading intervention classes compare to actual delivery? What are the curricular gaps or duplications as staff work to meet the reading needs of students matriculating through the Culler system?”

3.1.5 Multicultural Education

Culler Middle School staff is demonstrating an **“Exemplary” level of implementation** of the LPS initiative Multicultural Education (MCE). A review of the staff responses to the District-wide Implementation Audit™ Survey found that a super-majority of the staff (80%) has been working to implement Multicultural Education (MCE) for four or more years, all of the staff (100%) see themselves as either “proficient” or “expert” in their use of this initiative, 90% have received formal training in the initiative, and 78% devote three or more hours per week (three hours out of forty) to its implementation.

Additionally, a majority of the staff (74%) knows what their supervisors expect of them regarding the implementation of MCE, 61% are receiving coaching and modeling to help them implement it proficiently, 71% believe they have sufficient time and knowledge of the initiative to improve student achievement, and almost all staff members (96%) are either committed or extremely committed to implementing MCE with fidelity.

3.1.6 Positive Behavior Support

Culler Middle School staff is **demonstrating an “Exemplary” level of implementation** of the LPS initiative Positive Behavior Support (PBS), or the Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST). The staff has successfully implemented a building-wide student behavior system—BIST. The purpose of the system is twofold. First, it is to provide an integrated system of school-wide classroom management and individual student support designed to supply simple but effective tactics and strategies to improve behavioral outcomes for students. Second, it is to provide a school-wide behavior management plan which emphasizes partnering with students and parents through caring relationships and high expectations to increase student learning time, to stop disruptive and hurtful behavior, and to teach skills that will lead to success in school and life. The practices employed by teachers and students include helping students take ownership for their behavior, goal setting, strategies to help the student accomplish goals, and parental support and involvement.

3.1.7 Flexible Professional Development

Culler Middle School staff is **demonstrating an “Exemplary” level of implementation** of the LPS initiative Flexible Professional Development (FPD). Interviews as well as document analysis reveal that teachers are able to choose from a wide selection of professional development offerings (e.g., helping staff improve instructional strategies for reading comprehension, written expression, computation skills, and number sense in mathematics) that fit their needs and also meet the needs of the District. Teachers are able to choose sessions at various times throughout the summer and during the school year outside of the school day. The choices available to staff in turn help building-level leadership plan opportunities for their staff that meet varying needs and allow staff an opportunity to participate in creating their own professional development. The FPD initiative is viewed as an attempt to meet the needs of the teachers, which in turn helps spread essential practices throughout the District.

3.1.8 Grade Reporting/Assessment Literacy

Culler Middle School staff is **demonstrating a “Partially Proficient” level of implementation** of the LPS initiative Grade Reporting and Assessment Literacy. This partially proficient rating is the result of interviews with staff. Some of the expressed concerns about assessment and grading include:

- “Proficiency, or lack thereof, on CRTs are used as assessment data to shape and inform instruction.”
- “When does a formative become a summative assessment?”
- “At what point in time do I move on?”
- “Can a true summative assessment be formative?”
- “Does the assessment really reflect their learning? Is it a true validation of what was taught?”
- “Validity of the assessments we create is questionable.”
- “How do the two go together, grading and assessment literacy?”
- “Separating effort from academic knowledge and skills represented a dramatic shift for us as we saw the two connected.”
- “We are finding it hard to articulate the concepts to parents.”
- “Grading structures among levels are better aligned but still different.”

We know, based on Fuller’s (1969) research, that analyses of people’s concerns provide leaders useful insights as to where staff is regarding their individual and collective level of implementation. The kind of concerns reflected in these bulleted statements are typical of beginning levels of implementation—management concerns. Typically, the most effective organizational response to concerns such as these is to frequently offer information that is key to reducing staff concerns in addition to just-in-time training and how-to-do-it tips. For example, with concerns such as, “We are finding it hard to articulate the concepts to parents,” working with staff to develop a “script” or set of talking points for communicating with parents about the new grade reporting and assessment practices may be very reassuring to staff who are not feeling very efficacious.

Section 4.0 examines possible correlations between Lincoln Public School’s initiatives, professional practices, and resulting student achievement.

4.0 Relationship Between Initiative Inventory and Student Achievement

Mike Schmoker, in his book entitled *Results Now: How We Can Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning*, underscores how important it is for school and District leaders to

focus on *learning*, on assessment results [that] becomes the leverage for improvements in *teaching*, which is only as good as its impact on learning. When leadership is focused on results, on urging a formal, frequent review of the impact of instruction, teaching improves. (Schmoker, 2006, p. 126)

As teaching improves, so too does student achievement (e.g., Mortimore & Sammons, 1987; Marzano, 2003; Haycock, 2005). For example, researcher Allen Odden and his colleague conclude, “improved classroom instruction is the prime factor to produce student achievement gains” (Odden & Wallace, 2003, p. 64). While effective classroom instruction is necessary, it is not sufficient. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), in their meta-analysis of leadership, showed that a substantial relationship exists between effective leadership practices and increases in student achievement. Looking closely and analytically at teaching and leadership practices and how these two variables affect learning is foundational to this study and the specific focus of this section of our report.

In the previous section, we compared the degree to which Culler Middle School implemented the District’s eight prioritized initiatives. This section examines the degree to which the prioritized initiatives were implemented and how this implementation correlates to student achievement. In other words, this section addresses the third and final question of the Implementation Audit™, “What is the relationship between implementation and student achievement?”

We begin this section as we did the last by examining the whole implementation picture: the degree to which implementers are using all of the prioritized initiatives (see Exhibit 4.0), and the relationship to student achievement.

Range of Implementation Compared to Student Achievement

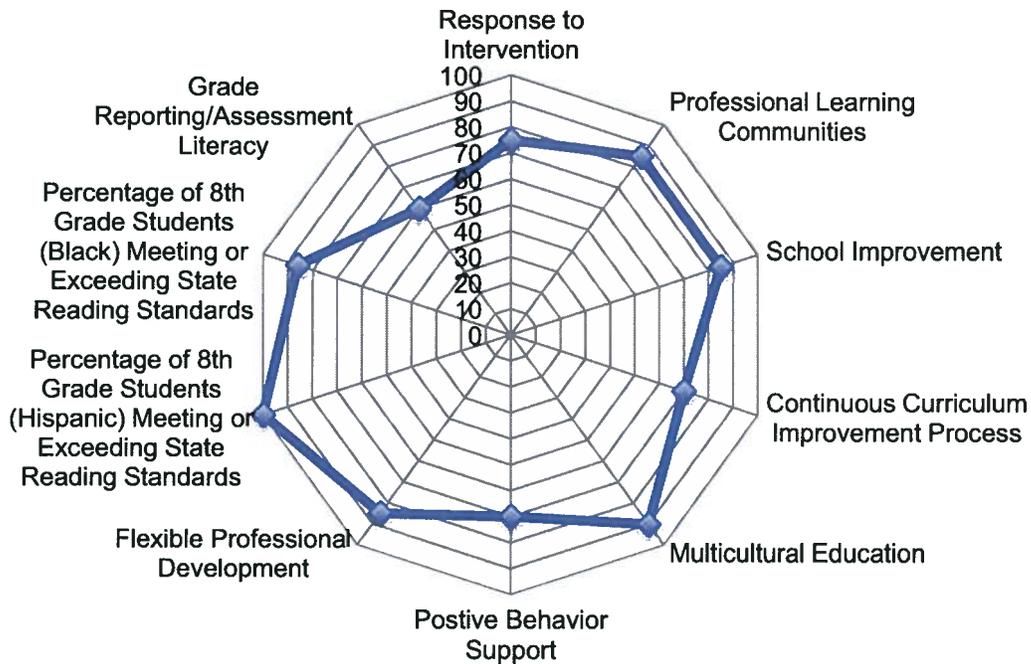


Exhibit 4.0 Range of Implementation Compared to Student Achievement

Each spoke of this “wagon wheel” depicts performance at Culler Middle School with the optimum performance found on the perimeter of the wheel by spoke. The school met criteria at 75% in terms of deep implementation for Response to Intervention (RTI), Flexible Professional Development at 85%, Multicultural Education at 90%, and Professional Learning Communities at 85%. Implementation of the remaining LPS prioritized initiatives was at varying degrees of proficiency: Grade Reporting and Assessment Literacy was at 60% and Continuous Curriculum Improvement Process was at 70%.

Finally, the Nebraska Department of Education reports that 93.28% of all students (including ELL and Special Education) at Culler Middle School met state reading standards. More importantly, 86.49% of Black and 100% of Hispanic students met the state reading standards. The basic question when examining student achievement results is simply, "What factors contribute to that achievement? For example, what contributed to the virtual elimination of the reading performance gap among Culler's Black, Hispanic, and White student subgroups?"

4.1 Student Achievement Compared to Range of Implementation of Prioritized Lincoln Public School Initiatives

The ability to draw correlations between implementation and student achievement is limited by the availability of evidence linking professional practice (causal factors) and student achievement results. Furthermore, emerging patterns from this Implementation Audit™ study closely align to the research detailed by Reeves (2004) in *Reframing Teacher Leadership*. Without 90% implementation of any given initiative, we may not see the hoped for/expected positive impact on student achievement envisioned in the original plan to bring the initiative into the teaching-learning community. Consequently, the relationships identified may serve as leading indicators, but they are in no way conclusive or well established.

Exhibit 4.0 begins that investigation, as it captures the 8th grade performance of Black and Hispanic students on the state reading standards, and then triangulates student achievement results against the degree of implementation assessed in the current audit by each of the eight initiative areas. Ten factors (spokes on a wagon wheel) represent the degree to which the Lincoln Public School's initiatives are implemented by the Culler Middle School staff with fidelity compared to achievement by Black and Hispanic 8th graders as a percentage of students meeting state reading standards.

Clearly, the deep implementation of School Improvement, Multicultural Education, Flexible Professional Development, and Professional Learning Communities is contributing to current levels of student performance, but the levels of implementation for Grade Reporting and Assessment Literacy (at 60%) and Positive Behavior Support (at 70%), are well below the optimum level, suggesting a need to re-direct resources and energies whenever possible. Culler Middle School is encouraged to examine whether these initiatives receive the same levels of focus or resources by staff.

As this year's school improvement plan is implemented, Culler has an excellent opportunity to gather additional formative assessment data currently being generated on building-based formative assessments, as well as to examine measures of implementation in terms of strategies demonstrated proficiently, their frequency, and how consistently they are demonstrated as best practices become more common at Culler Middle School.

5.0 Recommendations

Culler Middle School staff emerges from this Implementation Audit™ being validated for demonstrating solid success in efforts to implement several of the Lincoln Public School's prioritized initiatives. Most notable of these implementation efforts is the work to use Flexible Professional Development, Multicultural Education, School Improvement, and Professional Learning Communities. On the other hand, the Culler staff has been challenged to improve efforts to proficiently implement the remaining LPS initiatives.

The initiatives that are not yet implemented at a proficient or high level (e.g., Positive Behavior Support and Grade Reporting/Assessment Literacy) are worthy of attention by the Culler staff. The following recommendations are offered to align Culler Middle School's efforts more precisely and effectively to the vision and commitment of the Lincoln Public Schools:

5.1 Define Specific Measures of Instructional Practice

The Nebraska Department of Education's Continuous Improvement Process clearly outlines the components of an effective school improvement plan. For example, when schools create their "Profile," the state department urges schools to pay attention to both *effect data* (student performance) as well as *cause data* (adult performance). Specifically, the Nebraska Department of Education (2006) recommends that, "while the focus of continuous school improvement is student performance, the work is also directed to the causal factors of that performance, to instructional, organizational, and management practices and decisions that directly or indirectly affect performance" (p. 10). Consequently, we recommend that Culler Middle School revises the strategies contained within the school improvement plan so that they reflect measureable adult practices.

Culler's action plan to improve student academic performance and parent involvement is currently supported by a strategy that does not lend itself to being clearly monitored and measured. The action plan currently reads as follows, "All staff will collaborate in order to improve student learning." A simple rephrasing of the strategy would allow routine (monthly) monitoring and measurement of the relationship between this instructional practice and student achievement. For example, the rephrased strategy might read, "Increase the percentage of Culler staff that implement collaborative practices at the 'proficient or higher' levels, based on a rubric developed locally and monthly." By creating the Collaboration Rubric (invaluable to professional development if built collaboratively with staff) everyone (e.g., teachers, principals, central office staff, etc.) involved in implementing this initiative develops a common understanding of their direction. Having an end in mind will help staff focus and streamline initiative efforts. Additionally, the rubric helps staff and building leadership determine their progress and what additional steps need to be taken to move toward full implementation.

5.2 Check on Progress and Then Provide Assistance.

One component of our Implementation Audit™ Rubric, Monitoring and Evaluating, was consistently among the lowest rated of all components. In other words, the component that is perhaps the most important of all components is the weakest part of the Culler Middle School implementation process.

Because change does not happen overnight, and the journey to change is not without its potholes and detours, the process must be continuously assessed and monitored. Many times change efforts lose momentum when the leadership team fails to consistently and frequently—“at least monthly” (Reeves, 2009, p. 81)—check on the progress of those implementing the change. Culler Middle School leaders and staff must keep a finger on the pulse of change—levels of use and stages of concern (Hall & Hord, 2006) that implementers are demonstrating (specifically with the Grade Reporting and Assessment Literacy initiative) and commenting about by applying a variety of formal and informal interventions (e.g., informal interviews, collecting information about the knowledge and skills of implementers, collecting data about the implementers’ needs). What is more, continuous and frequent assessment and monitoring of this, as well as other, initiatives will help the school prevent “superficial” (Fullan, 2001) or “mediocre implementation” (Reeves, 2006), which, according to Reeves (2006), is a waste of time and typically yields “no better results than the absence of implementation” (p. 143).

Following this frequent check on progress, assistance should be provided to those who are implementing the initiative. When needs or problems are identified as a result of continuous and frequent monitoring, a response—coaching, mentoring, and follow-up—is required to support implementation efforts. Further, when change is successful, effective leaders have employed many small “interventions” (e.g., informal conversations with implementers regarding their concerns, encouraging individuals in their use of the innovation, assisting single and small-group implementers in problem-solving) that will help institutionalize the initiative within the Culler Middle School community.

6.0 References

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